# GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
# EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
# LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1427
ANSWERED ON:29.10.2008
SAARC CONFERENCE
Owaisi Shri Asaduddin

**Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

(a) whether the SAARC Conference was held in Sri Lanka recently;

(b) if so, the number of member countries participated in this Conference;

(c) the main issues discussed and raised by India during the Conference ;and

(d) the future strategy chalked out to address the issues discussed during the meet?

## Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE)

(a) The 15th SAARC Summit was held in Colombo,Sri Lanka,on August 23,2008.

(b) All eight SAARC Member States,Afghanistan,Bangladesh,Bhutan,India,Nepal,Maldives,Pakistan and Sri Lanka,attended the Summit.

(c) The main issues discussed during the Summit,by all member states including India,were transformation of SAARC from declaratory to implementation with implementation of identified regional and sub-regional developmental projects,operationalization of SAARC Development Fund,and increasing intra- regional trade through the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA).

Four agreements were also signed at the Summit,namely,1) Charter of SAARC Development Fund (SDF), 2) SAARC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters,3)Protocol on Accession of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to SAFTA;and 4) Agreement on the Establishment of South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO).The Summit also finalized the modalities of cooperation between SAARC & Observers and SAARC & Inter-Governmental Organizations.

(d) The future strategy chalked out during the Summit was to consolidate intra-regional cooperation on the identified areas of development and accelerate the process of transformation of SAARC from declaratory to implementation.